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ABSTRACT

Perspectives on higher education in Montana as viewed by the governor are presented. After briefly noting historical trends in Montana and the United States regarding education, concerns and trends in higher education are noted as follows: accountability to the public for how tax dollars are spent; evidence that there will be decreased demand for traditional higher education on the part of high school graduates; nontraditional students, including adults and women, pursuing schooling at all levels of higher education; the possibility of excess capacity in physical facilities at all educational levels; financial difficulties as educational costs continue to rise while enrollments decrease; and problems in the ability of institutions to be innovative in responding to needs and demands for new programs. It is suggested that only with precise enrollment projections, perhaps to 1990, can decisions concerning university planning occur. There is a need for continual review of objectives and programs of higher education units and for collaboration and innovation among university system units. Examples of the types of efforts required for improved management of educational resources in Montana include: a long-range plan for a coordinated system of higher education, including public and private institutions; the development of a coordinated system to provide appropriate opportunities for vocational, technical, and general continuing education and training; the development of new ways to provide heat, light, and power; the development of a plan to encourage maximum use of underutilized school facilities for nonschool purposes; and an effort to solve the reading difficulties among children and adults in Montana. (SW)

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ADDRESS TO THE STATEWIDE HIGHER EDUCATION OFFICERS

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THOMAS L. JUDGE
Governor of Montana

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Education Commission of the States

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SHEEO

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Address of Governor Thomas L. Judge to the Statewide Higher Education Officers, Big Sky, Montana, Tuesday, August 2, 1977

It is an honor and a very great pleasure to welcome to Montana the distinghished members of the Statewide Higher Education Executive Officer.

Dr. Pettit told me that this meeting is one of the best attended on record and that many of you have chosen to bring along your families.

As a humble Montanan, duly modest about the state we have, I easily understand your reasons for treating this meeting somewhat differently.

Although the territorial history of Montana is usually depicted as a panorama of wilderness and violent conflict, education was a large concern of the people who first came from the east to settle this region.

Private schools were opened in the mining camps as soon as some degree of stability had been attained. Students in schools were almost totaly adult males.

The Organic Act of 1864, which created the territory of Montana, mandated funding for the support of public education and provided a method for raising revenue.

In successfully asking the first territorial legislature to approve "An Act establishing a Common School System . . .," Governor Sydney Edgerton said in 1865: "In a free government like ours, where public measures are submitted to the judgement of the people, it is of the highest importance that the people should be so educated as to understand the hearings of public measures. A self-ruling people must be an educated people, or prejudice and passion will assume power, and anarchy will soon usurp the authority of government."

In the 1972 Constitution of the State of Montana, Article Ten, Section One states in clear language that stands as a challenge to this and future generations of Montanans, "It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person."

And so, through all the years encompassing the history of the people of our state, even before we were formally admitted to the Union, Montana had always embraced the notion that education is the key to life and opportunity. And the people of this region, today called Montana, have always maintained careful control over and deep concern with their school and university systems.

Education is today, in many respects, the largest and most important and most profitable organized activity in this or in any other society.

Nearly 30 per cent of the total population of Montana is engaged full-time in the educational system. Educational activities of all kinds account for nearly half of all expenditures of both state and local government.

For the individual, the educational experience is the very stuff of life--after all, it is precisely the ability to learn, to develop intellectually, asthetically, and spiritually, that distinguishes man from all other creatures.

Beyond the importance to the individual, however, the influence of the educational system upon the shape of society, especially a society of individual freedom and self-government, is almost beyond calculation.

It was Thomas Jefferson, and some of his contemporaries, who first observed that the rights to life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness were no more than pious cynicisms, unless each individual was liberated,

strengthened, and made fully human by education.

And thus it was that our American society was the first which dedicated itself to the proposition that all men were entitled to access to the educatonal process, and that it was the role and responsibility of the government to make adequate provision to assure just that.

If the equality of opportunitiy means anything in this country, it must involve the freedom and the ability of the individual to avail himself of an education, to develop his own individual and quite unique talents and abilities.

The United States was the first nation in the world to attempt to secure a place in an institution of higher learning for every aspiring young person. Enrollment in American colleges and universities, when measured against population, is double that in the Soviet Union and Japan, and quadruple that in England and Germany.

This effort has been undertaken not principally by private citizens and corporations. This effort has been initiated and shouldered largely by the people of the United States. Between 1923 and 1974, expenditures on higher education rose from 1.6 billion to 25 billion dollars. And the public share of those costs has risen from 21 to 59 per cent. In other words, these dramatic changes were effected within the political system of federal, state and local government. These changes could not and would not have occurred without the widespread support and urging of the American people. Now the American people are showing great interst in seeing how their money is being spent.

Montana's new Constitution, approved five years ago, reflects increasing concern with higher education and a determination to direct it accordng to perceived public need.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, among others, strongly objects to this trend. In a 1976 report entitled The State and Higher Education, the Foundation argues that centralization of authority over public systems "reduces the influence of students and of faculty members and of campus administrators . . .--all persons who know the most about institutions of higher education; governance process . . . and more costly, more cumbersome, more time-consuming, more frustrating and place more power in the hands of those who are the furthest removed and who know the least."

I see by this report that commissioners and chancellors are well-loved.

But the Foundation does not fail to note where the trend in centralization ultimately reaches: "The governor, in many states, is now the one dominant figure in higher education." And the Foundation likes governors even less than commissioners: "We consider this to be an unwise long-term development."

Perhaps, but I for one believe strongly that the people should have greater accountability from their public officials, the men and women who dispense their tax dollars. If the people are not satisfied with the job being done in building highways, protecting the environment or running the schools, they should be able to fire those they've hired and get somebody else. But they have to know who is responsible for what.

The Montana Constitution vests the Board of Regents, appointed by the governor, with clear and indisputable authority over the university system.

During the past four years, we have tried to assist the Board and the Commissioner of Higher Education in reorganizing the university system to meet the needs of our people now and in the future. And this process has

not been painless for Dr. Pettit, the regents, the legislators, the presidents, or me.

While available evidence suggests that the demand for traditional higher education on the part of recent high school graduates will decline in future decades, it is also true that change in clientele groups may be occurring. More older students, especially women, are seeking campus opportunities at all levels of higher education. Strong efforts are being made to bring education to groups in all geographical areas.

If enrollments in the colleges and universities do in fact decline, the implications would be numerous, the most important being excess capacity in physical facilities at all levels; financing difficulties as educational costs continue to rise while enrollments decrease; and problems in the ability of institutions to be innovative in responding to needs and demands for new programs. It is, therefore, imperative that intensive efforts be made to develop more precise enrollment projections, looking as far into the future as 1990. Only with such projections available can rational decisions be made on all facets of the University system's operations and needs. And those projections must be made and acted upon by a central authority.

At the same time, careful attention must be devoted to planning so scarce resources are efficiently used. In the short run, this means continual review of the role, scope, and program of the units of higher education. In addition, collaboration and innovation among university system units must be encouraged.

These and related trends demand that a stronger and more sophisticated capacity for the systematic evaluation of educational programs be developed. Additional time and effort must be devoted to identifying the results expected from expenditures of tax dollars on educational programs. Examples of the

types of efforts required for improved management of educational resources in Montana include:

1. A long-range plan for a coordinated system of higher education, including both public and private institutions. This plan should include comparison between the projected outputs of higher education programs and expected future occupational patterns in Montana, while recognizing at the same time, that higher education does more than prepare people for jobs.

2. The development of a coordinated system which will provide Montanans with appropriate opportunities for vocational, technical and general continuing education and training. Montana is entering an era of post-secondary education inwhich there will be a need to plan for education beyond high school in a comprehensive manner, taking into account all forms of post-secondary education. The emphasis should be on increased continuing adult educational opportunities and should support and geographic and occupational patterns of economic development that are likely to emerge in coming years.

3. In the contemporary world of shrinking energy resources, new ways must be found to provide heat, light and power. The university systems should play a major role in Montana's efforts to arrive at solutions to these problems.

4. A plan should be devised which encourages maximum use of school facilities for nonschool purposes when such resources are not being fully utilized to fulfill their primary educational purposes.

Solving the problem of reading and writing difficulties among children and adults in Montana is a critical challenge. Reading skills are basic to other aspects of education and to teh ability of an individual to participate fully in the economic, political, and cultural life of the state and the nation. And effective response to this challenge will require widespread

commitment and participaton by many segments of Montana society, including professional education and administrators, school boards, parents, librarians, and other citizens.

In short, in a paraphrase of a statement by Montana's Post-Secondary Education Commission: While it is impossible to determine the precise impact of current trends, the future of education in Montana and across the nation will differ markedly from the past. Simply conducting business as usual will not make the new realities disappear; yet, change for its own sake should also be avoided. The assumption, however, that old responses will be adequate for new problems and opportunities is dangerous. The choice that confronts the people of Montana is whether to begin to prepare for future conditions of the 70's, 80's, 90's, and beyond, or to let ourselves drift into the future locked into historical patterns which fail to address the real needs of our time.

But these things will be achieved only with the political system--which, in a democracy, is the means by which the people decide how to use their own resources.

Terry Sanford, who ascended from a governorship to the presidency of Duke University, said ten years ago: "More universities have suffered from political indifference than have ever been upset by political interference." How true and how important that we all incorporate that attitude in the efforts of those concerned with the future of higher education.

Our educational system, rooted as it is in the history of a state whose heritage is as rich and promising as its future, must as Lewis Mumford wrote in 1921--recieve the double impact of the past and the future. "If the past be too frightful for remembrance or the future too cloudy for anticipation, the present ceases to move in any particular direction. The day that

does not carry the seed of tomorrow in its womb is sterile and fit only for eating and drinking; the measured, the disciplined, purposeful life depends upon the promise of continuity . . . Art, literature, science are almost meaningless if their development promises to cease with the life of the particular persons for whom they have a meaning."

We must each do our parts to secure an educational process borne of the past, working in the present for the peace and perfection of the future.

We must maintin university systems that draw upon the best our students and faculty have to give, for our state and our nation.

To do less is folly and a criminal squandering of our most precious resources.